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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips

US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
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NWI Times **UPDATE: HUD secretary touts gov't cooperation; East Chicago residents present list of demands**
Post Tribune **Ben Carson meets with former East Chicago residents displaced by lead crisis**
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http://www.nwitimes.com/news/special-section/ec-lead/hud-secretary-ben-carson-meets-with-east-chicago-residents-displaced/article_8b2481a4-c93e-5601-9232-801dba365cea.html

UPDATE: HUD secretary touts gov't cooperation; East Chicago residents present list of demands

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- Aug 7, 2017 Updated 10 hrs ago

EAST CHICAGO — HUD Secretary Ben Carson said it was clear that residents relocated from the West Calumet Housing Complex because of soil contamination felt uprooted and that some were “inconvenienced.”

However, Carson said it was important to recognize it was necessary to remove residents from harm’s way and the relocation was done in a “good way.”

Residents, who spoke to reporters after their meeting with Carson and other officials inside the old Carrie Gosch Elementary School, said the relocation was far from a success and rejected statements by public officials that East Chicago could be a national model or blueprint for how to handle similar challenges in other communities.

“Maybe a blueprint of what not to do,” said Tara Adams, a former West Calumet resident, while meeting with reporters after public officials concluded their news conference.

“Even before the announcement was made, we should have been involved,” she said.

West Calumet residents also could have been given more time to move and been treated better by East Chicago Housing Authority staff, she said.

A total of 12 residents were permitted inside the meeting with Carson, U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, and Gov. Eric Holcomb, a spokeswoman for the governor said.

A year of challenges

The East Chicago Housing Authority and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ordered more than 1,000 people to relocate about one year ago from the West Calumet Housing Complex, which comprises about one-third of the USS Lead Superfund site in East Chicago.

Residents living at more than 1,000 properties in Calumet and East Calumet were not told to leave their homes before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began removing lead- and arsenic-contaminated soil.

Carson said he wanted to hear firsthand from residents about the challenges they've faced. The health of residents, particularly the young and vulnerable, was of particular concern, he said.

However, Carson didn't want to spend time focused on laying blame, he said. The complex was built in the early 1970s, before people became fully aware of the dangers of lead and arsenic exposure, he said.

Adams said she and other residents aren't looking to place blame on public officials responsible for building the complex in the footprint of the former Anaconda Lead Products smelter in the 1970s.

"What about right now? What about what happened last year?" she asked. "We can place blame there. It wasn't right. It's all about compassion."

Carson and others stressed that officials at the local, state and federal level have come together during the past year to address the challenges. All of the public officials said they remain committed to continuing that cooperation.

Donnelly said the relocation wasn't perfect, but the officials would continue working to improve.

"The commitment we make is we'll be here with residents every step of the way," he said.

Donnelly said he, Young and Visclosky recently sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services seeking long-term health monitoring for residents.

Young and Visclosky both talked about ensuring the city has sufficient resources to address the challenges. Visclosky said he felt a particular responsibility, because he is the only member of Northwest Indiana's congressional delegation who serves on an appropriations committee.

List of demands presented

Members of Calumet Lives Matter, the Community Strategy Group and East Chicago/Calumet Coalition Community Advisory Group presented Carson and his staff with a list of demands.

The demands to HUD include making federal funds available for a recovery fund to help residents affected by the crisis, giving former West Calumet residents the first right to any new housing developed in the city, and requiring a full environmental review of the former complex site before approving a demolition plan.

James Cunningham, deputy administrator for HUD Region 5, said there is no firm timeline for approval of ECHA's proposed demolition plan.

Residents also want HUD to review the East Chicago Housing Authority's programs and statements about lead abatement in its units and to investigate ECHA's statements about lead-based paint in its units and its employees' conduct during the relocation process.

The groups gave HUD a deadline to respond to their demands, said the Rev. Cheryl Rivera, of the Community Strategy Group. Carson and other public officials offered no assurances any of the demands would be met, she said.

Residents said Carson listened, but offered no insights into what the future might hold for the shuttered complex or its former residents.

"I just don't feel hopeful after this meeting," said Sherry Hunter, who has advocated on behalf of former West Calumet residents.

Copeland and Donnelly said during the news conference they support giving former West Calumet residents the first opportunity to move into any new housing.

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority announced Monday it is advancing a plan to develop more affordable housing in Northwest Indiana. The state received bids Monday from six development teams, and the authority's board is scheduled to select two teams later this month.

At least one of two projects would be in East Chicago, but no specifics about the location or design were available yet. Ground would not be broken until 2019.

Adams said there may be some residents who will always want to move home, but time could be a deterrent for her family. Once she's established in another community, she likely will be reluctant to move her family back.

"People don't think about the stress for the children," she said.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-carson-visit-st-0808-20170807-story.html>

Ben Carson meets with former East Chicago residents displaced by lead crisis

Meredith Colias Post-Tribune

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson visited the former Carrie Gosch Elementary School in East Chicago on Monday to meet with state officials and a handful of activists and former West Calumet residents about the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site.

"It's clear listening to some of the residents, they've had difficulty moving," Carson said during a brief appearance after the meeting. "We do have to clearly recognize the importance of getting our citizens out of harms way."

"That's been done here," he said. "It's been done in a good way. Are there better ways to do it? Probably."

Carson met with officials including Gov. Eric Holcomb, Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., and U.S Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, who largely praised the coordination between governmental agencies.

Earlier this year, Donnelly, Young and Visclosky invited EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and Carson to visit East Chicago to see why the agencies' continued support is necessary. Pruitt visited in April.

"The nation will use this a blueprint on how to deal with lead crisis or any other crisis across the nation," East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland said.

Some former West Calumet residents and activists disagreed with that characterization.

"The relocation as far as we were concerned was dismal," said the Rev. Cheryl Rivera, of the Community Strategy Group, who met with Carson. "There were two folks that have had a different experience and I would consider that an anomaly based on a number of families that we have worked with in the past year."

The role federal agencies played in relocating residents was "a blueprint of what not to do," former resident Tara Adams, who also met with Carson.

In February, Holcomb approved a disaster declaration for East Chicago to bolster efforts to assist residents affected by lead and arsenic contamination around the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site. As a part of that declaration, state officials would ask the EPA for funding to replace lead pipes at the Superfund site.

At Holcomb's direction, Indiana state agencies have already begun providing assistance to the city, including relocation assistance for the residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex and pledging to provide water filters to residents in the remainder of the Superfund site.

In the seven weeks since Demetra Turner left East Chicago, she had to quit her job when she finally found a housing complex outside Joliet, Ill., that accepted her Section 8 voucher.

Now worried about money for basic deposits for water and trash, she is searching for a job as she sees how her 12-year-old daughter will adjust to attending school for the first time outside of East Chicago.

As one of the last families to leave temporary housing in West Calumet in June, she said their move has brought more uncertainty as they have had to start a new life with minimal guidance, Turner said.

"It's been an uphill battle," she said. "I can't even stand here and pretend like it isn't."

"I held out as long as I could, because I didn't want to leave my home," Turner said. "We were set off on our own to fend for ourselves."

Rivera's group pushed a list of demands including the creation of an "East Chicago Recovery Fund" to give residents options to move again and provide other homeowners environmental risk assessments; and giving former West Calumet residents the first right if replacement housing is built.

Other demands were for HUD to complete an environmental impact statement for the proposed demolition, a HUD inspector general review of the relocation process and a regular contact representative for the group in HUD's D.C. office.

<http://www.fox32chicago.com/news/local/272508072-story>

Ben Carson visits lead-troubled East Chicago

(link to video)

<http://wbaa.org/post/hud-sec-carson-visits-emptied-contaminated-east-chicago-housing-complex#stream/0>

HUD Sec. Carson Visits Emptied, Contaminated East Chicago Housing Complex

By [Annie Ropeik](#) • 15 hours ago

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson says officials will work to help displaced families from a lead-contaminated public housing complex in East Chicago.

Carson met privately Monday with some residents and local lawmakers near the now-empty West Calumet Housing Complex. Gov. Eric Holcomb, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, U.S. Sens. Joe Donnelly and Todd Young, and East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland joined the discussion.

Despite what he called the inconveniences faced by the complex's nearly 1,200 uprooted residents, Carson says the relocation was necessary to keep them safe.

"That's been done here. It's been done in a good way," Carson says. "Are there better ways to do it? Probably. And are we learning what they are? Absolutely. And will we use those to try to prevent those kinds of problems in the future? We absolutely will."

Carson says the handling of the situation could be a model for other housing around the country that may have been built on contaminated ground before officials knew better.

"As long as we understand what the implications are now and we devote appropriate attention to it, I think we can resolve this issue and, as I said, learn from it, so this doesn't happen again," Carson says.

But former housing complex resident Tara Adams says she felt it was only a model of what not to do. She was in Carson's briefing, and passed along a list of community demands for health and financial follow-ups with displaced residents.

"You can talk, you can listen, but I want to see what you're going to do," Adams says.

Adams lives in Hobart now, and other officials in the briefing seemed more focused on how to help her and other former residents return to East Chicago.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly says he wants to help the city rebuild housing to replace the old West Calumet complex, so displaced families can return.

“We’re gonna work every day to get better at this, to have a chance for all of them to come back and have their hopes and dreams come true here in East Chicago,” Donnelly says.

Officials say they’ll provide more health and financial follow-up for residents, but didn’t offer specifics. Donnelly says they’re now focused on helping East Chicago rebuild housing to replace the old West Calumet Complex.

HUD has said it probably won’t rebuild housing on the West Calumet site, even once it’s cleaned up. The agency hasn’t moved forward on approving a plan to tear down the complex.

East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland has said he won’t decide on how to redevelop it until it’s been demolished and the EPA has cleaned up its contaminated soil.

Sincerely,

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